The Final American Frontier
Railroads

**BLUM**: Great industrial power? Really about average after Civil War (463-64)
- However, #1 by 1890 & manufacturing ↑12x 1865-1914

**Why RR?** Gateway to mass prod/cons, national market, use of natural resources, unity of USA
- 31Kmi in 1860s-200Kmi by 1900
- 10x National Debt spent on RRs by 1897
- 225M acres from federal & state governments
- Fewer independent lines over time
- Linked to post, telegraph & telephone + shipping + urban hub
- Transcontinental railroad completed (1869)
Miners’ Bonanza!

- 1859—Gold discovered in Pikes Peak, CO
- 1859—Comstock Lode, NV ➔ Biggest ever strike!
- 1874—Gold discovered in the Black Hills, SD ➔ Deadwood Mining Camp
- Copper, lead and zinc also mined
Mining Communities

• Word of bonanza spread → growth
• Self-defense
• Vigilantes
• Developed schools, churches
• Applied for territorial status
• Constitution written → statehood?
• Some became ghost towns some became SFO
Cattlemans’ Bonanza!

- Texas (1850s) – Birthplace of cow kings & cowboys
  - Cattle up 1000% to 5M by 1860
- Cow Towns – Dropoffs from cattle-drive trails where RR's transported beef to Northern Markets
  - Ex. Abilene, Dodge City
  - Attempts to protect from rustlers; no real law/government
- Open range – Unfenced grazing of cattle during the winter to fatten the herd ➔ cattle rush of the 1880s as people rushed to be ranchers
- Joseph Glidden (1874) – Barbed Wire
• Increase in supply of beef ⇒ a drop in prices
  – 1885 Winter – 85% of S. herds froze or starved to death
  – 1886 drought scorched grass for remaining herds
  – 1886-87 Winter – 40-50% of N. herds die
  – Sheep industry & farming weakened cattle industry
• More ranchers became landowners ⇒ Open range ranching ended
Farmers on the Frontier

- Farms – 2M in 1860 $\rightarrow$ 5.7M in 1900; +190M acres

- Homestead Act (1862) – 160 acres to W. settlers
  - Unintentionally created land monopolies & 2/3 failed

- Railroad made settlement possible

- Sod Houses; New drills allowed for deeper wells; windmills pumped water to the surface

- Productivity $\uparrow$ w/ new machinery (459) $\rightarrow$
  - Debt created by financing machines $\rightarrow$ squatters, tenancy
• **Dry Farming** – Deep plowing to keep soil moisturized ➔ needed machines & lots of land

• **Oklahoma Sooners** – **Benjamin Harrison** gives in to pressure & announced free homesteads of 160 acres to resettle Indian territory

• From 1867-1912—NE, CO, ND, SD, MT, WA, WY, UT, OK, NM and AZ entered the Union
Frontier Gender & Racial Roles

- **Women** – More accepted
  - had to work just as hard as the men
  - Gain the right to vote in Wyoming & other western states

- **Blacks** – Not fully accepted in the West
  - still a lot of racism and not offered the same land as white homesteaders

- **Chinese & Mexicans** – Discriminated against